Castle Sets the record straight on Embryonic Stem Cell Research; Urges Passage of 'Delaware Regenerative Medicine Act' -- January 10, 2006

Wilmington, D.E. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, author and sponsor of H.R. 810, 'The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act' which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in May 2005, today set the record straight on embryonic stem cells and urged the passage of Senate Bill 80, the 'Delaware Regenerative Medicine Act'. This legislation will be considered by the Delaware House of Representatives later this week.

At a press conference today, Castle was joined by State Representative Deborah Hudson, the sponsor of the legislation in the House and by embryonic stem cell research advocates Stephanie Hansen, former New Castle County Council President and her daughter Patti Hansen, a senior at the University of Delaware who was recently accepted into the Thomas Jefferson Medical School.

"Tens of millions of patients are suffering worldwide from diseases such as Juvenile Diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer and AIDS. And for many of these diseases, there is no cure, maybe a treatment to improve their quality of life, but certainly no cure. And that is what medical research is all about - finding a cure. Nobel Laureates and scientists throughout the world believe the hope to find these cures lies in embryonic stem cell research.

"As we head into this debate on Thursday, there are going to be many false statements made about exactly what this research is and what it isn't. I would like to take the opportunity to set the record straight today: First, it is important to understand what embryonic stem cells are. The stem cells come from days-old frozen embryos that were created through IVF for the purpose of creating a family. They are not created specifically for research and the families going through IVF take this painstaking process very seriously and therefore take the decision to donate these embryos to research very seriously. These embryos would only be donated to research with the informed consent of the couple and there is no financial inducement allowed - financial inducement to create the embryos or financial inducement to donate them. The decision to donate these embryos is made only after the decision to create a family is accomplished or exhausted. Most importantly, it is critical to remember that these embryos would otherwise be discarded as hospital waste," Castle said.

"Senate Bill 80 provides stronger enforcement and fines for any unethical embryonic stem cell research, provides regulation on an otherwise unregulated science, and if it becomes law, not one more embryo would be discarded today then would be tomorrow," said State Representative Deborah Hudson, House sponsor of the legislation.

Stephanie Hansen, former New Castle County Council President whose father was buried last Wednesday after suffering from ALS(Lou Gehrig's Disease) said, "My father's story puts a human face on the suffering that Senate Bill 80 hopes to address." Her father's doctor, Dr. Jeffrey Rothstein, the Director of the Robert Packard Center for ALS Research at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a professor of Neurology and Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University told her the best hope to treat or cure ALS will come from embryonic stem cell research. "My father was a real human being who was suffering and he might be alive today if embryonic stem cell research had more support," stated Hansen.

"There are real people who are living and suffering who may be helped by embryonic stem cell research, so please let us

use what we have been trained to do to help these individuals," said Patti Hansen a senior at the University of Delaware, soon to be medical student at Thomas Jefferson Medical School, and advocate for all stem cell research.

Castle made sure to set the record straight on many arguments that have recently been raised against embryonic stem cell research such as:

- Adult stem cell research: Many opponents say that adult stem cell research is just as good as embryonic stem cell research. This is simply not true. Adult stem cells are limited, they cannot be induced into any cell type and for some diseases, these cells do not even exist. One example is Juvenile Diabetes, also known as type 1 diabetes. Adult stem cells are also difficult to identify, isolate, purify and grow.It has been said that 58 plus diseases have been "cured" by adult stem cells, such as paralysis and diabetes. Once again, this is not true. Adult stem cells have been used to treat mainly blood borne diseases like leukemia or lymphoma. They are not proven to treat or cure a broad range of diseases. The best course of action is to support adult stem cell research and embryonic stem cell research. One is not a replacement for the other.

- Human cloning: It has been said that this legislation allows for human cloning. Once again, this is not true. This legislation outlaws human reproductive cloning. There are very stiff penalties in this bill for anyone who violates this.

- South Korea: It has been said that the recent scandals in South Korea are proof that this research should not be permitted. Once again, this is not true. The recent events in South Korea prove that this research is going to take place no matter what and only stresses the need for an ethical regulation process, which was not in effect in South Korea, to guide this research as Senate Bill 80 does, and my legislation, H.R. 810 does.

"We need to allow Delaware to become a safe haven for such research and remain a science and research-friendly state. We must give embryonic stem cell research the opportunity to develop," Castle said.